



It's Showtime

I was hired to fill some pretty large editorial shoes

I'M THE NEW EDITOR OF THIS WELL-ESTABLISHED, AWARD-winning magazine known in the project management community for its innovative knowledge sharing approach. So the writing skills wouldn't be enough. I knew I needed to really *get inside* the culture of NASA and good project management.

When you know there is a lot to be learned, I've found that humility is the best way to go. Acknowledge your weaknesses, ask questions of the right people, and hopefully turn those weaknesses into strengths. Sometimes you have to push a little, like Dennis McCarthy tells us in his interview about finding a rocket to launch COBE. The best thing is to get on the agenda of the people who know the answers; I didn't only rely on books, I pushed for people to *show* me what they know.

Who was I getting to answer all my questions about this new culture? Other APPL team members, ASK staff, and mainly the storytellers themselves. Yes, the best lessons I learned were from the ASK archives—straight from the mouths of the project managers. The magazine has always picked the best of the best and hoped that their examples would help others. So I went straight to ASK's website and started observing project managers in their natural habitat.

My research paled in comparison to the methods Owen Gaden describes in his story, "In Search of the Ideal Project Manager." In the end, he realized that there is no "single" way to project management success. Yet he and others helped me see some common attributes in successful managers: the real role models are those who get results while being true to themselves and their teams. Ken Szalai gives us an example of such a role model in his mentor, Cal Jarvis, and how his vision and his focus on results pushed their project to success.

Not every article in ASK is a success story; each shows the struggles of being a leader. The storyteller takes the temporary role of the mentor, and like Terry Little writes in his article on the topic, the students of the

audience get to ask, "Is this something worth emulating? Is it something to avoid?" The stories are a way for readers to observe project managers in action from afar.

While much of my cultural education can best be written in outline form, like you'll see in Alex Laufer's piece on "Managing Projects in a Dynamic Environment," the lessons can best be "illustrated" by referencing the ASK examples used to hammer home his many points. In the short time I've worked with Dr. Laufer, he's told me repeatedly to "show, not tell." And he's right—we need to see the action, to decide who to emulate, to figure out what qualities we respect.

On that note, I hope that you will let Linda Rutledge and Ed Hoffman show how balancing your career and home life enhances both, let W. Scott Cameron show you just how valuable communications skills are to engineers, allow Ron Zellar to show how a little music and candy go a long way towards creating team spirit, and observe the actions—some fruitful, some not—that our other featured storytellers show us in their narratives.

I feel honored to have been given the opportunity to join the team that brings you these narratives. So sit back, relax, and enjoy the *show*. •